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ABSTRACT

To assist state policymakers in using limited resources to enhance young children's readiness for school, this report examines the development and effectiveness of prekindergarten and parent support programs in the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB's) 16-state region. States in the region are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. For each state, information is provided about: program type and name; target population; program requirements; eligible providers; parent education and support; funding and children served; and contact information. Also listed are key questions for policymakers to consider as they develop or expand preschool programs. (KB)

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Prekindergarten and Parent Support Programs

SREB

David R. Denton

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During the 1990s, programs designed to improve children's readiness for school have proliferated in the SREB region. By the end of 1998, 15 of the 16 SREB states had at least one program to provide preschool for children who were not disabled. (Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, all states must provide early intervention services for preschool-age children with disabilities.)

The SREB region has been a clear leader in providing prekindergarten. Six SREB states rank among the nation's top 10 in the number of children served by state-supported prekindergarten programs. Texas leads the nation with 130,000 children served in 1998-99; Georgia is second with 61,000 (65 percent of all 4-year-olds in the state). In six SREB states, the combined number of children served by the state program and Head Start exceeds the number of children in poverty in the targeted age group (either 4-year-olds or both 3- and 4-year-olds). State-supported programs serve more than 275,000 3- and 4-year-olds regionwide.

The state programs vary significantly in scope and provide services in different ways. They range from pilot programs that serve fewer than 1,000 at-risk children to much more ambitious programs, such as Georgia's lottery-supported prekindergarten, which is available at no cost to every 4-year-old in the state. While several states fund separate preschool programs like those in Georgia and Texas, others provide funds to expand existing Head Start programs or, like North Carolina (with its Smart Start program), provide grants to communities to meet locally identified needs.

In addition to preschool programs, several states also have or are developing programs that help parents learn to fulfill their roles as their children's first teachers.

The region's policy-makers have grown increasingly interested in developing, expanding and improving efforts to prepare children for school. To help each state make the most of its commitment to school readiness and benefit from others' experiences, this report provides basic information about the structure, goals, funding and, where possible, results of preschool and parenting programs in the SREB states. It also lists some key questions for policy-makers to consider as they try to determine the best uses of limited resources.

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Program impact

Among the SREB states, the most impressive evidence of the effectiveness of early childhood education comes from **South Carolina,** which has been testing the readiness of children entering first grade since 1979 and has had a state-funded prekindergarten program for at-risk 4-year-olds since 1984. In 1979 only 60 percent of new first-graders met the state readiness standard; by 1998 that number had risen to 81 percent.

South Carolina officials attribute the increase in readiness to the prekindergarten program, which served almost 30 percent of all 4-year-olds by 1998-99, and to the move to full-day kindergarten, which began in 1996.

Readiness scores rose steadily following the introduction of the prekindergarten program, and by the early 1990s the passing rate for new first-graders had leveled off at about 75 percent. Then, in 1996-97, the Legislature provided funding for about one-third of students to move from half-day to full-day kindergarten. Funding was increased in each of the next two years until full-day kindergarten was available to all children in 1998-99.

Between 1995 and 1997, the first year after full-day kindergarten became available, the number of new first-graders passing the readiness test rose dramatically, from 74 percent to 80 percent. The passing rate rose again in 1998, to 81 percent.

The South Carolina experience clearly shows that prekindergarten programs can improve the readiness of at-risk children. The biggest improvements in readiness following the introduction of full-day kindergarten were for African-American students and students from low-income families. Between 1995 and 1998, the passing rate for African-American students rose from 65 percent to 74 percent, while the rate for students who qualified for free lunches went from 59 percent to 73 percent.

Although full-day kindergarten continues to be voluntary, 80 percent of kindergartners were taking advantage of it by 1998-99. The state prekindergarten program and Head Start together serve almost 22,000 South Carolina 4-year-olds, substantially more than the estimated 14,000 4-year-olds living in poverty.

Results on the South Carolina readiness test also suggest that children whose parents participate in the state's Parenting and Family Literacy Program score better than those in the general population. Most participants in this program are parents of at-risk children.

While no other SREB state has produced evidence as compelling as South Carolina's, several states have undertaken limited efforts to assess their programs' impact on children's readiness for school.

A longitudinal study of at-risk children who participated in **Georgia's** prekindergarten program during its first two years of operation found that participation in the program had a positive effect on the development, attendance and promotion of children in first grade. That study was discontinued after the program was opened to all 4-year-olds in the state in 1995. A study conducted during the 1997-98 school year examined program quality using the nationally recognized Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale. When results were compared with results from other national and state studies that used the same rating scale, Georgia's prekindergarten classrooms were found to be generally of higher quality than other states'. The classrooms were led by well-qualified teachers who knew how to teach children at that age level. However, teacher turnover rates, at 45 percent during the year studied, remain comparable to high turnover rates in early childhood programs nationally.

Evaluation of the **Kentucky** Family Resource and Youth Services Centers program has continued since its inception in 1990. The study has found "substantial evidence" that the centers are improving academic performance by removing barriers to learning. Classroom teachers said they observed significant gains in areas such as completing classwork and homework; following directions; obeying school rules; remaining on task; relating to peers; and cooperating with others. They did not report improvements in class attendance or tardiness.

Evaluation of **Maryland's** Extended Elementary Education Program has shown a positive effect on participants' performance through elementary and middle school as well as a significant reduction in referrals to special education. To date, participants have been followed as far as ninth grade.

In **North Carolina**, several studies of the Smart Start program have found that it has led to significant increases in both the quality and availability of child-care and preschool programs. Between 1994 and 1996, for example, the highest educational levels of center directors and teachers — essential to program quality — both increased. Not surprisingly, quality improvements were greatest in those counties that spent the highest percentage of their Smart Start funds on child care.

A longitudinal study of the **Texas** Public School Prekindergarten program in the early 1990s found that participants were less likely to be held back a grade or referred to special education and were more likely to be reading on grade level than nonparticipants.

Outside of the SREB region, long-term program evaluation results are available only in Washington state. **Washington's** Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program provides at-risk 4-year-olds (those below the poverty level) with educational, social, health, nutritional and cultural services to increase their chances of success in school. Results through the first eight years of the program indicate that children who participate in the program subsequently improve academically, behave better in school and have fewer health problems. In addition, parents of these children are more involved in their activities both in and out of school than parents of children who do not participate. Staff/child ratios of 1-to-6 are required, and each teacher must have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development, plus two years of experience in a preschool, child-care or kindergarten setting.

Prekindergarten and Parent Support Programs in SREB States

Program Type and Name	Target Population	Program Requirements	Eligible Providers	Parent Education and Support	Funding and Children Served	Contact
Alabama						
Prekindergarten and parent support ***Alabama Preschool Collaboration Project*** *Year begun:* 1996	At-risk children, birth through age 4 State population totals — *Under age 5:* 293,700 *In poverty:* 70,300 *Served by Head Start:* 15,000	None specified; program focus is on language development in the young child. Services determined by each grantee according to locally identified needs; six of the nine funded programs provide center-based prekindergarten; other services include screenings for health and developmental problems and transition-to-school services.		Involvement by parents is integral to the project. Services provided include: ■ home visits ■ parenting classes ■ family counseling	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $565,000 1,000 children Funds distributed by the Department of Education (seven programs) and the Alabama Children's Trust Fund (a separate state agency that distributes funds to two programs). Funding levels have been unchanged since 1996.	Rosemary Mobley Preschool Collaboration Project Department of Education P.O. Box 302101 Montgomery, AL 36130-2101 *phone:* (334) 242-8199 *fax:* (334) 242-9708 *e-mail:* rmobley@sdenet.alsde.edu
Arkansas						
Prekindergarten and parent support ***Arkansas Better Chance*** *Year begun:* 1991	At-risk children, birth through age 4 (5-year-olds eligible if not in kindergarten) *Must meet one of the following criteria:* ■ low-income family ■ parent with low education level ■ low birth weight ■ teenage mother ■ exposed to substance abuse or neglect State population totals — *Under age 5:* 176,800 *In poverty:* 38,900 *Served by Head Start:* 9,600	*Staff/child ratio:* 1:10 *Minimum staff qualifications:* *Teachers* – College degree *Assistants* – CDA or associate's degree in early childhood *Required days/hours:* School year School day 5 days per week *Program standards:* Must meet child-care licensing standards and be accredited by the state Department of Human Services.	Any education or community agency or child-care center.	Program funds may be used for either out-of-home preschool or HIPPY (Home Instructional Program for Preschool Youngsters) programs that train parents with low levels of education to work with their children at home.	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1998:* $10 million 9,000 children (totals include both preschool and HIPPY) Funds are distributed by competitive grants, with weight given to population distribution and poverty.	Kathy Stegall Department of Human Services Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education 101 E. Capitol, Suite 106 Little Rock, AR 72201 *phone:* (501) 682-4891 *fax:* (501) 682-4897

1. In the "Program requirements" column under "Minimum staff qualifications," "CDA" refers to the Child Development Associate credential, an entry-level, nondegree credential administered by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, with funding support from the federal government. Since 1993, every Head Start classroom has been required to have at least one staff member with a CDA, its equivalent or an appropriate college degree.
2. All figures for funding and numbers of children served have been rounded.

Program Type and Name	Target Population	Program Requirements	Eligible Providers	Parent Education and Support	Funding and Children Served	Contact
Delaware						
Prekindergarten ***Early Childhood Assistance Program*** *Year begun:* 1994	4-year-olds who are eligible for but not being served by Head Start State population totals — *4-year-olds:* 10,100 *In poverty:* 1,900 *Served by Head Start:* 1,100	*Staff/child ratio:* 1:10 *Minimum staff qualifications:* *Teachers* – CDA or college degree in early childhood *Aides* – High school diploma or GED *Required days/hours:* Minimum 160 days 4 hours per day *Program standards:* Must meet Head Start performance standards and provide services addressing: ■ home visits ■ transitions ■ nutrition ■ disabilities ■ parental involvement ■ education	Education or community agencies or other providers of early care	Each program must have a parent council that advises on program policy and operations. Programs are to encourage and develop individual plans for parental involvement and to assist families in getting support services as needed. Support services include: ■ transportation ■ home visits ■ parent education ■ GED programs	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $3.6 million 840 children Funds are distributed by competitive grants.	Jim J. Lesko Department of Education Early Childhood and Exceptional Children P.O. Box 1402 Townsend Building Dover, DE 19903 *phone:* (302) 739-4667 *fax:* (302) 739-2388 *e-mail:* jlesko@state.de.us
Parent support ***Parents as Teachers*** *Year begun:* Not available	Parents and firstborn children from birth to 36 months old, targeting at-risk families.	Home/school/community partnership designed to help parents give their children the best possible start in life. *Program includes four basic components:* ■ regular visits by parent educators ■ group meetings with other parents, program staff, and outside resource people ■ periodic screenings for developmental problems during program participation ■ resource networks to link parents with service providers in the community Curriculum is taken from the national Parents as Teachers program.	Local school districts	Key goals of the program are to get parents involved in their children's education and to develop a "true partnership between parents and schools." Parents' needs and concerns are considered in scheduling and location of personal visits and meetings. A related program provides all new parents in the state with a "Growing Together" portfolio before they leave the hospital after their first child's birth. The portfolio includes information to help them meet their children's health and developmental needs.	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $834,000 1,200 families Funds are distributed by competitive grants.	Jim J. Lesko Department of Education Early Childhood and Exceptional Children P.O. Box 1402 Townsend Building Dover, DE 19903 *phone:* (302) 739-4667 *fax:* (302) 739-2388 *e-mail:* jlesko@state.de.us

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Program Type and Name	Target Population	Program Requirements	Eligible Providers	Parent Education and Support	Funding and Children Served	Contact
Florida						
Prekindergarten ***Prekindergarten Early Intervention Program*** *Year begun:* 1987	At-risk 3- and 4-year-olds *Priorities:* ■ 75 percent must be 4-year-old children of working poor parents, including migrant and welfare-to-work families. ■ 25 percent may be 3- and 4-year-olds with disabilities; economically disadvantaged 3-year-olds; or nondisadvantaged migrant 3-year-olds. State population totals — *3- and 4-year-olds:* 390,100 *In poverty:* 97,500 *Served by Head Start:* 26,600	*Staff/child ratio:* 1:10 *Minimum staff qualifications:* *Teachers* – CDA or early childhood certification plus 30-hour training course *Aides* – 30-hour training course *Required days/hours:* School year 6 hours per day 5 days per week *Program standards:* ■ developmentally appropriate educational practices ■ resource information and referral ■ health screening ■ nutrition services	Local school districts receive funds and may provide services directly or contract with community agencies.	Programs must include on-site involvement by parents and provide parenting education, home visits and service coordination. Each district must have a District Interagency Coordinating Council that includes representatives of the local school board, county commission and department of children and families.	State lottery *Fiscal year 1999:* $97 million 30,000 children Funds are distributed according to a formula based on each district's percentage of the state's 3- and 4-year-olds and of the state's total of free lunches served in all grades.	Patty Ball Thomas Office of Early Intervention and School Readiness Florida Education Center 325 W. Gaines St., Suite 325 Tallahassee, FL 32399 *phone:* (850) 922-0034 *fax:* (850) 487-0946 *e-mail:* ballthp@mail.doe.state.fl.us
Prekindergarten ***Migrant Prekindergarten Program*** *Year begun:* 1978	3- and 4-year-old children of migrant laborers in the agricultural and fishing industries (supplements federally funded Title 1 migrant prekindergarten program)	*Staff/child ratio:* 1:10 *Minimum staff qualifications:* *Teachers* – Certification in early childhood or elementary education *Required days/hours:* School year 6 hours per day 5 days per week (optional extended-day, year-round services) *Program standards:* Each program must meet local school district requirements and federal requirements for migrant programs.	Local school districts receive funds and may provide services directly or contract with nonprofit agencies.	Involvement by parents is strongly encouraged but not required.	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $3.3 million 2,500 children Funds are distributed by a formula based on migrant population in each district.	Patty Ball Thomas Office of Early Intervention and School Readiness Florida Education Center 325 W. Gaines St., Suite 325 Tallahassee, FL 32399 *phone:* (850) 922-0034 *fax:* (850) 487-0946 *e-mail:* ballthp@mail.doe.state.fl.us

Program Type and Name	Target Population	Program Requirements	Eligible Providers	Parent Education and Support	Funding and Children Served	Contact
Florida (contd)						
Parent support ***Florida First Start Program*** *Year begun:* 1990	At-risk infants and toddlers (birth to age 3 — or age 4 if not enrolled in preschool) and their families	Home/school partnership	Local school districts	First Start Parent Resource Centers coordinate: ■ home visits by trained parent educators at least monthly ■ developmental assessments and health screenings for children every six months ■ group meetings for parents ■ support services to connect families with community resources	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $3 million 26 of 67 districts Funds are distributed according to a formula.	Patty Ball Thomas Office of Early Intervention and School Readiness Florida Education Center 325 W. Gaines St., Suite 325 Tallahassee, FL 32399 *phone:* (850) 922-0034 *fax:* (850) 487-0946 *e-mail:* ballthp@mail.doe.state.fl.us
Georgia						
Prekindergarten ***Georgia 4 year old Prekindergarten Program*** *Year begun:* 1992	All 4-year-old children State population totals — *4-year-olds:* 112,900 *In poverty:* 23,700 *Served by Head Start:* 12,300	*Staff/child ratio:* 1:10 *Minimum staff qualifications:* *Teachers* – Teacher certification; CDA; Montessori; or vocational degree in early childhood *Aides* – High school graduation *Required days/hours:* School year 6.5 hours per day 5 days per week *Program standards:* Must use an age-appropriate curriculum approved by the Office of School Readiness.	Any education, community or child-care entity that can meet state child-care licensing requirements.	Programs must offer two one-on-one parent/teacher conferences per year. The families of children identified as being at risk receive resource coordination services.	State lottery *Fiscal year 1999:* $218 million 61,000 children Funds are distributed by contracts based on the number of children served by each program.	Pam Shapiro Deputy Director Office of School Readiness 10 Park Place S., Suite 200 Atlanta, GA 30303 *phone:* (404) 656-5957 *fax:* (404) 651-7184 *e-mail:* sopm@mail.osr.state.ga.us

Program Type and Name	Target Population	Program Requirements	Eligible Providers	Parent Education and Support	Funding and Children Served	Contact
Georgia (contd)						
Parent support ***The Family Connection*** *Year begun:* 1991	At-risk families and children	Counties coordinate the services provided by multiple community agencies.	County government	Program goals are: ■ healthy children ■ children ready for school ■ children succeeding in school ■ strong families ■ self-sufficient families Each county pursues its own vision for achieving these goals. Activities include: ■ child health screenings ■ parenting classes ■ employment services ■ home visits ■ GED and adult literacy ■ pregnancy prevention	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $8.3 million 130 of 159 counties The Children's Community-Based Initiative unit of the state Department of Human Resources allocates funds based on community need.	Juanita Blount-Clark Coordinator The Family Connection 100 Peachtree St., Suite 500 Atlanta, GA 30303 *phone:* (404) 527-7394 *fax:* (404) 527-7443 *e-mail:* juanita@ga-academy.org
Kentucky						
Prekindergarten ***Kentucky Preschool Program*** *Year begun:* 1990	4-year-old children from families that are eligible for free school lunches 3- and 4-year-old children with developmental problems or disabilities, regardless of family income State population totals — *3- and 4-year-olds:* 103,800 *In poverty:* 27,000 *Served by Head Start:* 13,300	*Staff/child ratio:* 1:10 *Minimum staff qualifications:* *Teacher* – Certification in interdisciplinary early-childhood education *Associate teacher* – CDA; associate's degree in early childhood/child development; or technical school diploma in preschool/child care *Required days/hours:* 175 days per year Half-day 4 days per week (5th day used for support services) *Program standards:* State guidelines reflect National Association for the Education of Young Children practice standards, Head Start performance standards, and state child-care licensing requirements.	Local school districts receive funds and may provide services directly or contract with Head Start or community agencies.	Programs must allow active involvement by parents, and lead teachers must visit each child's home at least twice a year. Programs must coordinate with child-care providers, Family Resource Centers and other entities to help parents meet their children's comprehensive needs.	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $40 million 15,500 children Funds are distributed by formula to all districts based on actual enrollment.	Debbie Schumach Department of Education 500 Mero St. Frankfort, KY 40601 *phone:* (502) 564-7056 *fax:* (502) 564-6771 *e-mail:* dschumac@kde.state.ky.us

Program Type and Name	Target Population	Program Requirements	Eligible Providers	Parent Education and Support	Funding and Children Served	Contact
Kentucky (contd)						
Parent support ***Family Resource and Youth Services centers*** *Year begun:* 1990	Children and families in communities served by any public school where at least 20 percent of students are eligible for free lunch. Services are available to all families in the community, regardless of whether they have a child enrolled in the sponsoring school. *Family Resource Centers* (FRCs), located in elementary schools, serve children from birth to age 12. *Youth Services Centers* (YSCs), located in middle or high schools, serve children over age 12. *Combined Family Resource and Youth Services Centers* (FRYSCs) serve schools and children at all levels, from birth to high school completion.	Mission is to improve academic performance by removing barriers to learning and to identify, coordinate and use community resources to help children succeed in school. FRCs must address six components: ■ child care for 2- and 3-year-olds ■ after-school care for 4- to 12-year-olds (full-day care during summers and on days school is not in session) ■ Families in Training programs for new and expectant parents ■ literacy training for families ■ support and training for child-care providers ■ direct health services or referrals to health services Mandated services may be provided directly, through contracts with local providers, or through referrals to identified resources.	Local school districts receive funds, and center staff are school district employees. Each center must have an advisory council that plays a central role in the design and delivery of services. At least one-third of council members must be parents, and no more than one-third can be school district personnel. Councils also may include community representatives and students.	Each center continually must inform parents and guardians about the center's services. Services are to be provided on days and at times that are most convenient for parents and children. Each center must have procedures for ensuring parental permission to provide services to their children and/or for sharing information among agencies.	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1998:* $39.7 million 600 centers (310 FRCs, 165 YSCs, 125 FRYSCs) Of 1,303 public schools in the state, 1,152 are eligible, and 957 of those are served. The centers reach more than 440,000 students. Every county in the state now has at least one center. Grants of $10,000 to $90,000 are allocated based on the number of eligible students in each school district.	Robert D. Goodlett Executive Director Office of FRYSC Cabinet for Families and Children 275 E. Main St. Frankfort, KY 40621 *phone:* (502) 564-4986 *fax:* (502) 564-6108

Program Type and Name	Target Population	Program Requirements	Eligible Providers	Parent Education and Support	Funding and Children Served	Contact
Louisiana						
Prekindergarten ***Preschool Block Grant*** *Year begun:* 1985	At-risk 4-year-olds, with priority given to low-income families State population totals — *4-year-olds:* 64,800 *In poverty:* 22,000 *Served by Head Start:* 12,000	*Staff/child ratio:* 1:10 *Minimum staff qualifications:* *Teachers* – Certification in early childhood or elementary education *Required days/hours:* School year School day 5 days per week *Program standards:* Curricula must address both age-appropriate and individual needs of young children.	Local school districts	Encouraged but not required	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $6.7 million 3,200 children Funds are distributed through block grants.	Lani Urbatsch 8(g) Consultant Board of Elementary and Secondary Education P.O. Box 94064, Capitol Station Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9064 *phone:* (504) 342-8727 *fax:* (504) 342-5843 *e-mail:* sbese@mail.doe.state.la.us
Maryland						
Prekindergarten ***Extended Elementary Education Program*** *Year begun:* 1979	At-risk 4-year-olds *Priorities for eligibility include:* ■ limited English ■ homelessness ■ prior enrollment in Head Start or Even Start ■ referrals ■ identified health problems ■ home and family difficulties State population totals — *4-year-olds:* 71,800 *In poverty:* 10,800 *Served by Head Start:* 5,700	*Staff/child ratio:* 1:10 *Minimum staff qualifications:* *Teachers* – Certification in early childhood *Aides* – High school graduation *Required days/hours:* School year 2.5 hours per day 5 days per week *Program standards:* Programs must meet Department of Education Standards for Implementing Quality Early Learning Programs; program self-appraisal is required every three years.	Local school systems receive funds and may provide services directly or contract with private providers.	Families are involved in an educational partnership with schools.	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $19 million 10,700 children Funds are distributed based on a formula.	Rolf Grafwallner Department of Education 200 W. Baltimore St. Baltimore, MD 20910 *phone:* (410) 767-0342 *fax:* (410) 333-2379 *e-mail:* rgrafwal@msde.state.md.us

Program Type and Name	Target Population	Program Requirements	Eligible Providers	Parent Education and Support	Funding and Children Served	Contact
Mississippi						
No state-funded programs	State population totals — *3- and 4-year-olds:* 82,000 *In poverty:* 27,000 *Served by Head Start:* 22,200					
North Carolina						
Parent support ***Smart Start*** *Year begun:* 1993	Children from birth through age 4 and their parents State population totals — *Under age 5:* 518,900 *In poverty:* 109,000 *Served by Head Start:* 16,800	Dependent upon the type of service provided. *Services provided:* Local partnerships determine what services to provide. They may include early childhood education, health care and other critical services needed to improve children's readiness for school. 70 percent of funds for direct services are spent to ensure the quality, availability and affordability of child care.	Nonprofit Partnerships for Children established by each county	Families participate with county Partnerships for Children to identify ways to improve services for children under age 5. They also help to develop annual plans for service delivery.	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $150 million Each of the state's 100 counties has a program operating or under development, serving more than 100,000 children. Funds are distributed based on need.	Karen Ponder Program Director Partnership for Children 1100 Wake Forest Road, Suite 300 Raleigh, NC 29604 *phone:* (919) 821-7999 *fax:* (919) 821-8050 *e-mail:* kponder@smartstart-nc.org

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Program Type and Name	Target Population	Program Requirements	Eligible Providers	Parent Education and Support	Funding and Children Served	Contact
Oklahoma						
Prekindergarten ***Early Childhood Four-year-old Program*** *Year begun:* 1980	All 4-year-olds are now eligible (effective fiscal year 1999) State population totals — *4-year-olds:* 46,500 *In poverty:* 11,200 *Served by Head Start:* 7,000	*Staff/child ratio:* 1:10 *Minimum staff qualifications:* *Teachers* – Certification in early childhood education *Assistants* – The school district is required to ensure that teacher assistants receive training in early childhood. *Required days/hours:* School year May be half-day (2.5 hours per day) or full day (6 hours per day) 5 days per week *Program standards:* Established by state Department of Education.	Local school districts may apply for funds and may offer programs directly or contract with private or nonprofit entities such as Head Start, child-care providers and churches.	Programs must encourage family involvement.	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* At least $36.5 million 16,700 children Funds are distributed based on a formula.	Ramona Paul Assistant State Superintendent Department of Education 2500 N. Lincoln Blvd. Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4599 *phone:* (405) 521-4311 *fax:* (405) 521-6205 *e-mail:* ramona_paul@mail.sde.state.ok.us
Prekindergarten ***Head Start Supplement*** *Year begun:* 1993	Children eligible for Head Start	Federal Head Start program standards	Established Head Start programs	Same requirements as Head Start	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1998:* $3.6 million *Additional children enrolled:* 387 *Served with extended hours:* 12,000 Funds are distributed through Community Action Agencies based on county enrollment and poverty levels.	Ruby Thompson Head Start Program Manager Association of Community Action Agencies 2915 Classen Blvd., Suite 215 Oklahoma City, OK 73106 *phone:* (405) 524-4124 *fax:* (405) 524-0863 *e-mail:* rubyjthompson@aol.com

Program Type and Name	Target Population	Program Requirements	Eligible Providers	Parent Education and Support	Funding and Children Served	Contact
Oklahoma (contd)						
Parent support ***Parents as Teachers*** *Year begun:* 1991	Parents and children (birth to age 3) who live in a participating school district; priority given to families with at-risk children	Home/school/community partnership designed to help parents give their children the best possible start in life. Program includes three basic components: ■ personal visits by parent educators on a monthly basis ■ group meetings with other parents, program staff, and outside resource people ■ screenings for developmental problems in children	Local school districts	Program is designed to foster an early partnership between home and school so that parents will be involved more actively in their children's formal schooling later on.	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $3 million 6,100 families Funds are distributed based on a formula.	Ramona Paul Assistant State Superintendent Department of Education 2500 N. Lincoln Blvd. Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4599 *phone:* (405) 521-4311 *fax:* (405) 521-6205 *e-mail:* ramona_paul@mail.sde.state.ok.us

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Program Type and Name	Target Population	Program Requirements	Eligible Providers	Parent Education and Support	Funding and Children Served	Contact
South Carolina						
Prekindergarten ***Early Childhood Program*** *Year begun:* 1984	At-risk 4-year-olds *Priorities:* ■ children with academic deficiencies ■ children for whom English is a second language State population totals — *4-year-olds:* 53,400 *In poverty:* 13,900 *Served by Head Start:* 6,500	*Staff/child ratio:* 1:10 *Minimum staff qualifications:* *Teachers* – Certification or provisional certification in early childhood education *Aides* – High school diploma or GED *Required days/hours:* 180 days per year 2.5 hours per day 5 days per week *Program standards:* Established by state Department of Education; curriculum determined locally based on needs.	Local school districts receive funds and may offer programs directly or contract with Head Start programs or programs funded by the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant.	Parent education and parent volunteers are required.	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $22.3 million 15,400 children Funds are distributed based on the number of first-graders in each school district whose scores on the state readiness assessment indicate they are "not ready."	Carolyn Donges Office of Standards and Professional Development Department of Education 1429 Senate St., Room 602B Columbia, SC 29201 *phone:* (803) 734-8364 *fax:* (803) 734-5953 *e-mail:* cdonges@sde.state.sc.us
Parent support ***Parenting and Family Literacy Program*** *Year begun:* 1993	Children through age 5 and their parents	Goal is to support parents in their roles as principal teachers of their preschool-age children.	Required of all local school districts	Common services include: ■ developmental screenings for children ■ instructional newsletters ■ parenting and family literacy classes ■ transportation and child care for parents attending those classes ■ home visits ■ support groups/workshops	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $4.7 million *Number of children served in 1998:* ■ 11,000 by home visits ■ 28,000 by group parenting instruction ■ 5,000 by family literacy and/or adult education 538 parents were awarded either a GED or a high school diploma.	Estella L. Holliday Office of Community Education Department of Education 808 Rutledge Building 1429 Senate St. Columbia, SC 29201 *phone:* (803) 734-8073 *fax:* (803) 734-5685

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Program Type and Name	Target Population	Program Requirements	Eligible Providers	Parent Education and Support	Funding and Children Served	Contact
Tennessee						
Prekindergarten ***Early Childhood Pilot Program*** *Year begun:* 1998	3- and 4-year-olds eligible for Head Start State population totals — *3- and 4-year-olds:* 146,500 *In poverty:* 33,700 *Served by Head Start:* 13,100	*Staff/child ratio:* 1:8 (3-year-olds) 1:10 (4-year-olds) *Minimum staff qualifications:* *Teachers* – Pre-K–3 certification *Others* – CDA *Required days/hours:* Year-round 5.5 hours per day 5 days per week Extended hours if parents work or are in school. *Program standards:* Curriculum must be developmentally appropriate, and each program is expected to provide a model and staff training for other programs.	Any nonprofit education or community entity	All programs must include involvement by parents and are expected to work with state-funded Family Resource Centers.	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $3.1 million 600 children Funds are distributed through competitive grants.	Jan Bushing Department of Education Andrew Johnson Tower, sixth floor 710 James Robertson Parkway Nashville, TN 37243-0375 *phone:* (615) 741-0345 *fax:* (615) 532-4899 *e-mail:* jbushing@mail.state.tn.us
Parent support ***Family Resource Centers*** *Year begun:* 1993	At-risk children and families (as defined by the local community)	Mission is to provide information and training for families and to help them learn to resolve problems using resources within the community. Each center identifies its community's greatest needs and designs programs to address them.	Local education agencies, which must form advisory councils made up of at least 50 percent parents	Centers are to work with parents; community and business leaders; state and local service agencies; and public and private organizations. Common services include: ■ child care ■ child development ■ health services ■ home visits ■ nutrition services ■ parenting education ■ tutoring/mentoring	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $3.5 million 104 centers are serving school communities in 79 school systems in 65 counties. Each center receives a grant of $33,300, with at least $16,700 matched locally.	Jan Bushing Department of Education Andrew Johnson Tower, sixth floor 710 James Robertson Parkway Nashville, TN 37243-0375 *phone:* (615) 741-0345 *fax:* (615) 532-4899 *e-mail:* jbushing@mail.state.tn.us

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Program Type and Name	Target Population	Program Requirements	Eligible Providers	Parent Education and Support	Funding and Children Served	Contact
Texas						
Prekindergarten ***Public School Prekindergarten*** *Year begun:* 1984	At-risk 3- and 4-year-olds (priority given to 4-year-olds) *Definition of "at-risk":* ■ unable to speak or understand English ■ educationally disadvantaged ■ homeless State population totals — *3- and 4-year-olds:* 640,600 *In poverty:* 160,100 *Served by Head Start:* 49,200	*Staff/child ratio:* No requirement *Minimum staff qualifications:* *Teachers* – Certification in early childhood or kindergarten *Required days/hours:* School year 3 hours per day 5 days per week *Program standards:* New curriculum requirements are being developed.	Local school districts receive funds and may provide services directly or contract with education or community agencies.	Encouraged but not required	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $216 million 130,000 children Every district that has at least 15 eligible 4-year-olds must offer prekindergarten. Funds are distributed based on a formula.	Cami Jones Director Early Childhood Education Division of Curriculum and Professional Development Texas Education Agency 1702 N. Congress Ave. Austin, TX 78701 *phone:* (512) 463-9501 *fax:* (512) 463-8057
Virginia						
Prekindergarten ***Virginia Preschool Initiative*** *Year begun:* 1995	At-risk 4-year-olds (as defined by each preschool program) State population totals — *4-year-olds:* 93,000 *In poverty:* 12,100 *Served by Head Start:* 6,900	*Staff/child ratio:* 1:8 *Minimum staff qualifications:* *Teachers* – Highest qualifications normally required by each grantee (in public schools this means early childhood certification) *Required days/hours:* School year School day 5 days per week *Program standards:* Each program must meet state child-care licensing requirements and provide a "quality preschool education."	Local governments and school districts receive funds and may provide services directly or contract with community agencies.	Required of all programs, including at least one home visit per year. Programs also must address the need for: ■ comprehensive health services for children ■ comprehensive social services ■ transportation	State appropriation *Fiscal year 1999:* $23.5 million 6,100 children (of 7,600 targeted) Funds are distributed based on a formula.	Jenna Clayton Early Childhood Specialist Department of Education P.O. Box 2120 Richmond, VA 23218-2120 *phone:* (804) 786-2102 *fax:* (804) 786-1703 *e-mail:* jclayton@pen.k12.va.us

Program Type and Name	Target Population	Program Requirements	Eligible Providers	Parent Education and Support	Funding and Children Served	Contact
West Virginia						
Prekindergarten ***Kindergarten for 4-year-olds*** *Year begun:* 1983	4-year-old children who are not eligible for kindergarten (eligibility established by local school districts) State population totals — *4-year-olds:* 21,700 *In poverty:* 6,100 *Served by Head Start:* 4,100	*Staff/child ratio:* No requirement *Minimum staff qualifications:* Certification in elementary education *Required days/hours:* None *Program standards:* None specified	Local school districts	No requirement	Local school boards can establish prekindergarten programs, but no state funds have been appropriated for this purpose.	Sharon Flack Department of Education Curriculum Office 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E. East Capitol Building Building No. 6, Room 330 Charleston, WV 25305-0330 *phone:* (304) 558-7805 *fax:* (304) 558-0459
Parent support ***Parent/Educator Resource Centers*** *Year begun:* 1983	All families with children age 21 and younger; educators who work with families	Core services include: ■ providing up-to-date information and resources ■ training parents to be more effective in helping their children succeed ■ helping families understand their children's educational needs and options for meeting those needs ■ building links between families and community services ■ training educators to work more effectively with parents Individual communities determine how to provide services.	Local school districts	Centers must be in centralized, accessible locations, such as schools, libraries or community centers. Centers are staffed by parents and professionals who work as a team.	Local school boards can establish centers, but no state funds have been appropriated for this purpose. The state Department of Education provides training, information and technical assistance. The department also maintains a communications network. Goal is to have centers in all 55 local school districts; 39 of those districts now have centers.	*State team:* Mary Pat Ferrell, Barbara Grady, Cathy Knighton Department of Education Office of Special Education 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E. East Capitol Building Building No. 6, Room 304 Charleston, WV 25305-0330 *phone:* (304) 558-2696 *fax:* (304) 558-3741

Key policy questions

When considering how to develop or expand preschool programs, state policy-makers should ask the following key questions:

- What is the target population and how will eligibility be established?
- What are the desired results of the program and how will they be measured?
- What minimum standards must be in place in critical areas to ensure that the program will be good enough to achieve the desired results?
  - Staff qualifications?
  - Staff/child ratios?
  - Curriculum?
  - Facilities?
- Are enough qualified people available to staff the program? If not, what steps must be taken to provide training to increase that number?
- Are enough facilities that meet program standards available to house the program? If not, what steps must be taken to increase that number?
- How will the program be funded and how can funding be structured to ensure program continuity and stability?
- How will participants be chosen if need exceeds capacity?
- What state agencies will need to be involved in the program and which agency will be primarily responsible for policy decisions?
- What impact will existing educational or child-care rules and regulations have on the program?
- Could the program objectives be served better by putting additional resources into existing services — for example, raising state child-care standards and providing training in child development to child-care providers?
- How can local community support for the program be created most effectively, and what must be done to inform the public about the program?

- What issues not related to the program must be addressed to prevent problems that might limit its impact — for example, how do transportation and the program's hours of operation affect working parents' needs?

- When children move from the preschool program to the public schools, how can continuity be ensured?

High-quality preschool and parent-support programs can improve children's readiness for school. Such efforts can help to reduce the need for and the expense of special programs for children who require extra help after they enter school. But these benefits can be expected only if program standards are high enough and all service providers meet those standards. A successful program requires a long-term commitment of adequate, consistent financial support.

The types of programs that will be most appropriate and effective will vary from state to state. By carefully considering other states' experiences and answering the questions posed above, policymakers can help to ensure that funds are used as effectively as possible to improve school readiness.